

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

Tailor's Cross and Low Well, Foulridge.

In the quaint village of Foulridge, nestled in the heart of Lancashire, two historical landmarks stood side by side—Tailor's Cross and Low Well. These landmarks held stories of the past, whispered secrets that had been passed down through generations.

Tailor's Cross, also known as Maiden's Cross or Foulridge Cross, was a relic from the Norman era. Weathered by time and made of millstone grit, it stood alongside the Foulridge War Memorial. Although modest in size, it held a mysterious charm. Upon closer inspection, one could observe its unique features—a ring-headed cross with a flat central disc, adorned with a pair of carved shears. These shears, their meaning lost to time, added an air of intrigue to the ancient cross.

Experts debated its origin and age. Some believed it to be from the 12th century, while others argued for a later 13th-century date. One thing was certain—it was unlike any other cross in Lancashire. Its closest relative was a Norman cross in Stanground, Huntingdonshire. Professor Richard Bailey, a renowned expert in Lancashire sculpture, dated both crosses to the 12th century.

In the year 1900, Henry Taylor meticulously described Tailor's Cross in his book on crosses and holy wells of Lancashire. Back then, the cross stood much taller, with only four feet visible above the grass. Taylor noted that it was socketed to an oval stone pedestal, the large stone now lost to time.

Over the years, the cross had been moved from its original location. Taylor mentioned it standing on a little hill, one mile north of Colne Parish Church. However, the Foulridge Parish Council's website stated that it had stood beside Kirk Bridge, between Foulridge Lower and Upper Reservoirs. Today, it found its home at the Foulridge War Memorial, where it stood apart from the bustling road, surrounded by a paved area and seating.

Legends and tales had intertwined with Tailor's Cross, giving rise to its alternate name—Tailor's Cross. One local folklore suggested that a tailor from Foulridge had defied Oliver Cromwell's men by refusing to make uniforms for them. As punishment, he was sentenced to death, and the shears were carved on the stone as a warning to others. However, the carving predated the Civil War by centuries, rendering the tale implausible.

Another story linked to the cross portrayed the Royalists as the villains. According to this tale, a young woman named Margaret Burnard (or Barnard) had patiently waited at the cross every evening for her fiancé, Robert, to return from the Civil War. Tragically, Robert had fallen in the Battle of Marston Moor, but Margaret refused to accept his demise and continued her vigil. It was said that Royalist soldiers, infuriated by her unwavering hope, took her life. She was buried where the cross now stood. While similar stories existed across Britain, this tale was likely fabricated to explain the name Maiden's Cross.

Leaving Tailor's Cross behind, a short journey up Skipton New Road led to the next historic landmark—Low Well. Located on Towngate, this well had once been the primary water source for the village. Two large hand-chiseled troughs and a pump comprised the restored well. A blue plaque proudly declared its significance, stating that for years it had provided water to the village until it ran dry in the twentieth century. To commemorate the millennium, the parish council reinstated the well, complete with a recycling pump.

Tailor's Cross and Low Well stood as testaments to Foulridge's rich history. Each held stories and mysteries, connecting the present with a distant past. Visitors and locals alike would gaze

upon them, feeling a sense of awe and wonder as they delved into the tales that whispered from their weathered surfaces.

By Donald Jay